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The Negative Shadow Cast by Positive Psychology

Contrasting Views and Implications of Humanistic and Positive Psychology on Resiliency

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Resiliency is the ability to survive, or even thrive, during adversity. It is a key construct within both humanistic and positive psychology, but each sees it from a contrasting vantage. Positive psychology decontextualizes resilience by judging it as a virtue regardless of circumstance, while humanistic psychology tends to view it in a more holistic way in relationship to other virtues and environmental affordances, clarifying how resiliency can actually be either a virtue or a vice depending upon circumstances. Adolf Hitler is presented as an example of a resilient person who would not be seen as virtuous, and the US Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness study training warfighters in resiliency illustrates possible ethical problems with a decontextualized view of resiliency.

Humanistic and positive psychology share much in common, although positive psychology has distanced itself from humanistic psychology by claiming to be a radical innovation essentially unrelated to its predecessor, humanistic psychology. However, both attempt some similar goals, such as to ameliorate the widespread overemphasis within contemporary psychology on negative phenomena, such as focusing more on psychopathology than psychological health. But the founders of positive psychology have harshly criticized humanistic psychology on a number of grounds, such as for its supposed lack of scientific rigor and failure to contribute to social problems, dismissing it as being only a fossilized remnant from the 1960s, rather than an extant vibrant movement (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In previous writings, we have pointed out some problems with the attempt of positive psychology to gain distance from and position itself as superior to humanistic psychology (e.g., Friedman, 2008; Friedman & Robbins, 2008; Robbins, 2008). We believe this is a continuation of the long history of humanistic psychology being marginalized by mainstream psychology (Churchill, 1997). As such, this

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distancing can be a way to escape carrying some of the perceived negative baggage inuring to humanistic psychology, especially as it provides an ongoing critique of mainstream psychology that many find uncomfortable (i.e., by critically questioning many of the mainstream's fundamental assumptions, such as naïve realism and the superiority of quantitative methods of data analysis). Nevertheless, humanistic psychology remains an influential force within contemporary psychology (Friedman, 2011); positive psychology has thrived by essentially presenting a limited version of humanistic psychology more antiseptically suited to mainstream sensibilities. Specifically, positive psychology has ignored the emphasis on holism promulgated by humanistic psychology, both in content and method, which allows a greater complexity in the views promoted by humanistic psychology. Positive psychology has also removed some of the sticky complexity inherent to the human condition by emphasizing only the positive and ignoring the shadow of human reality. In contrast, humanistic psychology has, in general, tried to promote a rebalancing of competing perspectives within psychology by counterbalance existing imbalances toward the negative through using a holistic orientation that embraces both positive and negative aspects of the human condition as parts of a larger harmonious whole. This holistic vision has been pursued, even if including the negative might pose discomfort for those wanting only to emphasize the positive, as in exploring negative concepts (e.g., such as evil; Becker, 1985; May, 1982) and concepts that include both negative and positive aspects (e.g., such as awe; Bonner & Friedman, 2011; Schneider, 2009). In method, humanistic psychology has used a balance of pluralistic methods (Friedman, 2008), whereas positive psychology has denigrated humanistic psychology as being unscientific (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) for its diverse methods, some of which are not seen by positive psychology as sufficiently scientific. In this regard, positive psychology tends to overtly privilege quantitative methods within a narrow philosophical framework of philosophical positivism, again losing the holistic perspective contained within the broader view offered by humanistic psychology, which more freely includes qualitative approaches in its science. Perhaps most problematic in this regard is that positive psychology claims to be able to approach its subject matter in a value-free way, congruent with philosophical positivism but incongruent with more recent developments in the philosophy of science that reveal the impossibility of ever totally separating values from science. To illustrate some of these problems, our article focuses on one construct common across both psychologies, namely resiliency, which has been identified as a central concept within positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and which is often traced to Maslow's (1943) seminal work leading to the founding of humanistic psychology. Resiliency frequently crosses over both psychologies, such as the work of Maddi on hardiness, which is conceptualized as a precursor to resilience and which has been published in the leading journals of both humanistic (e.g., Maddi, Khoshaba, Harvey, Fazel, & Resurreccion, 2011) and positive psychology (e.g., Maddi, 2006). We compare and contrast resiliency as understood within both psychological approaches, paying particular attention to how this concept is now being applied in the largest social science intervention ever conducted, namely in a study attempting to teach resiliency skills from the perspective of positive psychology to literally everyone in the US Army (Novotney, 2009). We examine this in terms of its many problems, especially its potential to cause harm from being based on the limited understanding of resiliency provided by positive psychology, which contrasts with the broader understanding available from humanistic psychology. In essence, positive psychology approaches resiliency as an individual character strength (e.g., University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center, <http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>) that on its own constitutes a virtue

regardless of its context. From this perspective, resiliency is simplistically separated from other character strengths, as well as from its many possible contexts, as a stand-alone virtue. Humanistic psychology, in contrast, views resiliency in a more nuanced fashion, seeing it as holistically affected by various contexts (including in relationship to other character strengths and differing environmental affordances). In fact, from a humanistic psychology perspective, not only is resiliency a virtue only when depending upon its context (e.g., as in a living wisely through intentionally pursuing proper ends in line with the Greek classical conceptualization of *eudaimonia*; Robinson, 1999), but it even can be seen as a character flaw (or vice rather than virtue) under some circumstances. We argue that positive psychology has decontextualized resiliency as a stand-alone virtue by viewing it as an individual trait that opens resiliency to being misunderstood, and also misapplied. We illustrate the problems that inure from this limited perspective by discussing how the character traits of one of history's most nefarious personages, Adolph Hitler, could be seen as resilient by using the approach of positive psychology. Hitler, of course, is but one extreme example, but we use it to illustrate our point about how the positive psychology approach to resilience can lead to problems. We also show some of the dangers of this limited perspective within the successfully marketed resiliency training offered to the military in the largest applied scheme in the history of psychology, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF). By examining these negative shadows of the perspective of positive psychology on resilience, we provide a contrast between humanistic and positive psychology, which we hope will enable positive psychologists to become more self-reflective in their discipline, as well as help humanistic psychologists see more clearly some vital distinctions between their discipline and positive psychology.

RESILIENCY AND EUDAIMONIC HAPPINESS

When positive psychology was first articulated, three concerns were its main focus, namely character strengths or virtues, positive experiences, and positive social institutions (Gillham & Seligman, 1999; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Much of the early work in positive psychology emphasized positive experiences, especially subjective well-being from a hedonic view of happiness based on a favorable ratio of pain to pleasure (Diener, 2000; Kahnemann, Diener, & Schwartz, 1999). However, a shift has occurred in positive psychology to increasingly focus on virtues, resurrecting Aristotle's (1934) theory regarding eudaimonic happiness—the pursuit of good ends by harmonizing virtues and the examination of how they are contextually related (e.g., Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Ryff, 1989). Although hedonic and eudaimonic well-being have been found correlated in a number of interesting studies (e.g., Compton, Smith, Cornish, & Qualls, 1996; King & Napa, 1998; McGregor & Little, 1998), they are essentially independent constructs. However, positive psychology still often confuses hedonic and eudaimonic happiness (see Martin, 2007). Specifically, we argue that eudaimonic happiness is deeper compared to a more superficial hedonic happiness (Robbins, 2006, 2008), and well-being is best predicted from living a purposeful life in accordance with eudaimonic happiness, because maximizing the hedonic ratio of pleasure to pain poorly predicts well-being (e.g., Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005; Vella-Brodrick, 2006).

Some in humanistic psychology have been critical of an overly simple hedonistic formulation of subjective well-being (Friedman, 2008; Robbins, 2008). For example, self-actualization is a

central concept for humanistic psychology, understood as the innate tendency for humans to thrive toward expressing their full potential when given a proper context (Maslow, 1968). Self-actualization is fundamentally teleological, as persons are seen as moving toward a desired end-state to maximally flourish, which is similar to the notion of eudaimonia (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Maslow's (1965) concept of the good life contained a congruent concept of the good society that rewards virtue. In the following well-known quote, the Aristotelian influence in Maslow's thinking is apparent, including his borrowing Aristotle's famous acorn metaphor:

That which the person *is* and that which the person *could* be exist simultaneously for the psychologist, thereby resolving the dichotomy between Being and Becoming. Potentialities not only *will* be or *could* be; they also *are*. Self-actualization values as goals exist and are real even though not yet actualized. The human being is simultaneously that which is and that which he yearns to be. . . . Man demonstrates *in his own nature* a pressure toward fuller and fuller Being, more and more perfect actualization of his humanness in exactly the same naturalistic, scientific sense that an acorn may be said to be "pressing toward" being an oak tree. (p. 214)

Maslow (1987), however, differentiated his stance from Aristotle's emphasis on intellect and rationality, as follows:

[An] advantage that we have over Aristotle is that we have learned . . . that self-realization cannot be attained by intellect or rationality alone. You remember that Aristotle had a hierarchy of human capacities in which reason took the top place. Along with this went inevitably the notion that reason contrasted with, struggled with, and was at odds with human emotional and instinctive nature. We have learned . . . that we must modify considerably our picture of the psychological organism to respect equally rationality, emotionality, and the conative or wishing and driving side of our nature. Furthermore . . . we have learned these are definitely not at odds with each other, that these sides of human nature are not necessarily antagonistic but can be cooperative and synergic. (p. 116)

Maslow emphasized the importance of integrating both cognition and emotion in a holistic way, consistent with contemporary research that shows the futility of disconnecting affect from thought, such as cognitive neuroscience findings that the two cannot be separated, and both codetermine behavior (e.g., Gray, Braver, & Raichle, 2002).

From a eudaimonic approach stemming from Aristotelian views, resiliency is seen as a virtue only when it is understood as part of a collection of traits, which together allow realization of happiness despite, or perhaps even because of, adversity. This way, resiliency can be conceptualized as a higher-level virtue. It incorporates a range of other virtues that can protect people from adversity so they can persist toward self-actualization, but resiliency cannot stand alone as a virtue unto itself. The humanistic psychology perspective is, once more, different from that of positive psychology in that it emphasizes a holistic perspective, one that requires interrelationships among virtues within larger contexts, including systems of integrated human traits and environmental affordances, whereas positive psychology is more limited by viewing virtues as isolated traits.

We argue that the concept of virtue requires this degree of holistic complexity, as one who performs good actions is not just hedonically motivated, but is aiming toward good ends in an ethical sense. Fowers (2005) described virtues similarly as "*character strengths that make it possible for individuals to pursue their goals and ideals and to flourish as human beings*"

(p. 4; italics in original), such that the virtuous person is attracted to what is good, as “worthwhile goals elicits a desire to pursue them wholeheartedly rather than being conflicted between duty and desire” (p. 5). A virtuous person is, therefore, not merely externally compelled to be benevolent; rather a virtuous person has conscious aims toward achieving good for both self and others. Essentially, actions must result from personal agency, and lack a sense of being predetermined, in order to be considered virtuous.

However, positive psychology (e.g., Seligman, 2002) advocates achieving happiness through cultivating signature strengths by treating these as independent virtues, isolated from each other. This is contrary to more nuanced psychological approaches that go beyond simply construing resilience as an individual attribute by attempting a more unified theoretical view (Lightsey, 2006), as well as different from the holistic approach promulgated by humanistic psychology. This is also contrary to Aristotle’s system in which virtues are understood as interdependent (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2005). For Aristotle, according to Fowers (2005), subdividing the virtues into a categorical system fails to appreciate virtues as properties of a whole person, missing their larger context in which virtues become “evident in relation to the overall shape of one’s life and the harmonious integration of character” (p. 11). The holistic nature of virtues requires an appreciation that they are unequal in status, as some virtues operate as master (or superordinate) virtues that regulate other (subordinate) virtues, so they do not become expressed as extremes, which in their extremity can lose their virtuous qualities and become instead vices. Aristotle considered practical wisdom or *phronesis* to be the primary master virtue guiding all other virtues (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2005), as without *phronesis*, personal strengths would become unregulated and unbalanced vices, rather than harmonized to an appropriate golden mean based upon context.

In this way, resilience can be understood as a superordinate virtue (similar, but inferior, to *phronesis*), which involves a network of other virtues that protect one from harmful adverse circumstances and which promote adaptation and even growth in response to adversity, but only when balanced. Hardiness as a construct illustrates one way to conceptualize resilience as superordinate. Maddi wrote within both the positive (2006) and humanistic (Maddi et al., 2011) psychology traditions, conceptualizing hardiness (a construct essentially similar to resiliency) as being composed of challenge, commitment, and control. Challenge involves adversity being an opportunity for developing wisdom, a challenge that can be successfully met or that can overcome one’s resources. Commitment involves remaining engaged with events and people in life through a sense of integrity, despite being faced with a potentially overwhelming challenge. Control involves putting forth continuing effort in the attempt to affect events and people, rather than becoming passively accepting of adversity (i.e., a victim). When these three qualities are present, a person will have enhanced resiliency. From a humanistic psychology perspective, such resilience would be a superordinate virtue that requires combining subordinate virtues (e.g., hope in the face of challenge, perseverance as commitment, and self-regulation as control) as guided by *phronesis*. When taken together, rather than in isolation, these virtues exceed the sum of their individual parts. For example, hope toward a good end without perseverance would passively be incapable of turning thoughts into action, and perseverance alone could be used toward either good or bad ends. In isolation, neither perseverance nor hope are virtues per se, but each has the potential to become either virtue or vice. However, when properly combined, hope and perseverance together can regulate behavior toward achieving good goals and may emerge as virtues. Their virtuous quality, however, is mutually interdependent, each requiring the other to become

seen as a virtue. A resilient person, therefore, may be seen as one with a balanced combination of strengths, such as perseverance and hope, contextualized with a proper aim toward the good. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that hope is linked to persistence in meeting challenges, such as in rehabilitation from spinal-cord injuries (Kortte, Gilbert, Gorman, & Wegener, 2010) and treatment for asthma patients (Tennen, Cloutier, Wakenfield, Hall, & Brazil, 2009); research on hope has demonstrated it enhances adjustment to chronic disease (Rasmussen, Wrosch, Scheier, & Carver, 2006). This empirical connection between hope and perseverance is congruent with the more holistic view from both humanistic psychology and Aristotelian virtue theory.

IS RESILIENCY ALWAYS A VIRTUE?

Resiliency has generally been seen as an individual trait that allows for adaptive coping, and sometimes thriving, during and after adversity. Block and Block (1980) described it as “resourceful adaptation to changing circumstances and environmental contingencies” (p. 48). Rutter (1987) described it as “the positive pole of individual differences in people’s responses to stress and adversity” (p. 316). Garmezy (1991) described it as “the capacity for recovery and maintained adaptive behavior that may follow initial retreat or incapacity upon initiating a stressful event” (p. 459). Greene (2003) described it as “the ability to overcome adversity and be successful in spite of exposure to high risk” (p. 77). In each description, resiliency involves the ability to provide an adaptive response when a less adaptive one might be expected given the circumstances; alternatively, resiliency might even involve more than just an adaptive response that enables survival, but a healthier one that enables flourishing, and actually demonstrates growth and improvement after an adverse circumstance (Miller, 2003). Positive psychologists have tended to argue that resiliency be classified as a virtue, whether or not it involves a healthy adaptive response. Peterson and Seligman (2004) postulated criteria for classifying a virtue, including the following: (a) It relates to living a good life; (b) it has intrinsic value, yet produces beneficial extrinsic outcomes; (c) it does not harm others; (d) it cannot be transformed easily into something negative; (e) it can be stably measured; (f) it is distinct from other virtues; (g) it is found in esteemed people; (h) it is lacking in some people; and (i) it has extant mechanisms within a culture to develop and maintain it. But resiliency only meets some, but not all, of these criteria. For one, it is neither clearly distinct from other virtues, nor can it easily be collapsed into any of them. Resiliency and courage (i.e., defined as “emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal;” VIA Institute on Character, 2008) especially overlap, and it also relates closely to other identified virtues in the positive psychology classification system, namely creativity, hope, persistence, perspective, self-regulation, social intelligence, and vitality. Although this overlap between resiliency and many other virtues could discount it from being seen as a virtue using the positive psychology classification system, many other virtues also overlap within this system. For example, persistence also involves other virtues (e.g., hope, prudence, self-regulation, and vitality). Fowers (2005) argued that classifying virtues independently, while ignoring their codetermining relationships to other virtues, provides an inadequate conceptualization of virtue. We agree and, in the case of resiliency, placing it within this system of classifying virtues represents a problem with the system itself, namely resiliency can potentially be seen as a virtue, but

only within some contexts. Specifically, we believe that the decontextualized attempt to classify virtues within positive psychology is seriously flawed and, instead, requires a more nuanced holistic approach, such as is articulated by humanistic psychology (e.g., Fowers, 2005; Robbins, 2008). This would be evidenced in the case of resilience if it can be clearly shown to not be a virtue *per se*, but only one in terms of its favorable interdependency with other virtues and within an affording context, which the case of Hitler demonstrates.

RESILIENCY AS A VALUE IN ACTION

Positive psychologists have claimed a value-neutral approach to science in the attempt to bolster its credibility with the mainstream but, by invoking the language of virtues, such as in Peterson and Seligman's (2004) strengths and virtues classification, it has clearly hybridized in an attempt to be objective by combining science with the squishy area of ethics. This is something humanistic psychology has never shied away from doing, but it also has never claimed to be objective and above the fray of dealing with the messiness of competing human values. Just as positive psychology has wavered between hedonic and eudaimonic conceptualizations of happiness, it has created another quandary for itself in its divided loyalties, claiming to adhere to a value-neutral science while dealing with unavoidably value-laden material. In terms of resiliency, the hedonic ratio of pleasure to pain simply does not adequately define many resilient individuals who are able to withstand current misery for future good. It can even be argued that some suffering in life is necessary for cultivating the *phronesis* needed to guide resiliency into becoming a virtue (e.g., Sartor, 2003; Thurman, 2005; Wegela, 2009). Consequently, from the eudaimonic approach to ethics, in which happiness is seen as intrinsically an outcome of a virtuous life, it no longer makes sense to examine the relationship between hedonic happiness and the good life because, in essence, happiness and the good life are one in the same when seen under a broader view. To the extent that positive psychology recognizes this, and again it wavers, it is assuming a eudaimonic ethics and has already become a *prescriptive* science, devoid of its proclaimed value neutrality, in addition to being a *descriptive* and *predictive* science as it claims exclusively to be (Robbins, 2011).

Consumers of science tend to attribute moral prescriptive authority to empirical findings (Eidelman, Crandall, & Pattershall, 2009; Kay et al., 2009), which positive psychology has capitalized upon very successfully. In fact, Eidelman et al. (2009) found that simply believing in the existence of some person or thing is often fallaciously confounded as evidence for its goodness, which they called "the existence bias" (p. 765). Due to this bias, science can easily become prescriptive, even when value neutrality might be its goal, and this explains a conundrum for positive psychology. For any science to honestly resist such biases, it necessarily must be explicitly self-critical regarding its underlying assumptions and their ethical implications, including as operating within its theoretical, research, and applied paradigms. This provides a particularly *apropos* critique to positive psychology, as it tends to naively assume a value-neutral stance, while criticizing humanistic psychology for its broader scientific approach that more honestly acknowledges these unavoidable value entanglements. The example of eudaimonic happiness, central to both humanistic and positive psychology, demonstrates that both necessarily deal with value-laden assumptions and implications, but, again, humanistic psychology openly acknowledges this, whereas positive psychology does not. We argue that it is better to reveal,

rather than attempt to conceal, the value-laden nature of this and similar dilemmas, and then it is preferable to explicitly utilize tools available for evaluating such dilemmas, even if they cannot be totally subsumed under scientific methods.

Consequently, we examine how resiliency can create problems for the assertion by positive psychology that it uses objective, so called value-free, approaches. From a naive vantage, it might be assumed that a resilient person would use character strengths to virtuously achieve ethical ends, yet this is clearly not always the case. As one extreme, we present Adolf Hitler (see Payne, 1990; Rosenbaum, 1999) as an example of resilience as conceptualized by positive psychology.

Hitler's father, Alois, was an illegitimate child, and Adolf was the 4th of 6 children to Alois and Karla Hitler (Rosenbaum, 1999). During his youth, Hitler's carefree and playful attitude took a more somber and serious turn after the death of his younger brother from measles (Payne, 1990). After the premature death of his father, his mother was penniless, and Adolf found himself homeless and a drifter. His mother died of breast cancer at the young age of 47. Yet, despite all of these tragedies in his life, the young Adolf managed to accomplish much. He became an outstanding orator, a dynamic leader, and a cunning manipulator of the masses—skills that would catapult him to become the dictator of Germany. If we did not know the context of Hitler's life, and the great evils he would inflict upon the world, most would readily concede that Adolf Hitler seems to have been a remarkably resilient person. But should we go so far as to say that, at least in terms of the "signature strength" of resiliency—and all of the subordinate virtues implied—Hitler was to that extent a "virtuous person"? Of course, we would answer unequivocally, no. (Robbins & Friedman, 2011)

Of course, using Hitler as an extreme example to make this point might be questioned as unfair. Strauss (1953) famously wrote about the misuse of the *reductio ad Hitlerum* (which he saw as a variant of the *reductio ad absurdum*) to illustrate the fallacy of extreme argument by association, discounting that a positive assertion should be refuted simply because it was shared with Hitler. And there are many varieties of what later became known as Godwin's Law, which essentially states that in polarized debates, eventually Hitler will be used as an example that ends all meaningful discourse (Godwin, 1994). Nevertheless, there is also the famous argument made by William James: "If you wish to upset the law that all crows are black—it is enough if you prove one single crow to be white" (quoted in Millington, 2006, p. 9). Hitler provides a *prima facie* case that one can be resilient according to the criteria set by positive psychology, yet not be virtuous.

Returning to Aristotle's ethics, he understood any virtue as inseparable from the goodness toward which that virtue is aimed. If a supposed virtue was to lead toward evil, and Hitler is the quintessential modern whipping boy of evil, it could not be a virtue, but rather would be potential virtue perverted into a vice. Similarly, resilience should not be seen as a virtue unless it is used for a benevolent end. And the question of differentiating benevolent from malevolent ends is a challenging matter of values requiring critical reflection, which refutes any claim of being value free. That positive psychology claims its authority, and its resulting success, on being a value-free science distinct from humanistic psychology is a clear problem when positive psychology delves into matters such as this. Consumers of science require correct information to avoid being swayed by hidden biases, as empirical evidence is insufficient for answering questions of value—such as determining right from wrong courses of action.

RESILIENCY TRAINING IN THE US ARMY

To provide an opportunity to reflect critically on these ethical complexities, we discuss the CSF study, as this case highlights a number of important implications for the differences between humanistic and positive psychology in their conceptualization of resiliency. However, we want to explicitly mention that we intend no disrespect to the military in examining CSF, as we explicitly appreciate soldiers' many sacrifices and acknowledge them as a vulnerable population deserving the best attention psychology can offer. We also believe firmly that open dialogue about issues, even if critical, is essential for achieving optimum outcomes.

CSF is the largest psychology research study ever. Beginning in 2009, it is slated to cost over US\$120 million and proposes to train all US soldiers (with over a million soldiers already trained) in resiliency skills (Novotney, 2009). Its purported goal is to reduce posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological disorders in this vulnerable population, as these problems have been at epidemic levels in warfighters returning to the United States after a series of recent wars. In statistics cited by Novotney, over one-third of US soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq may eventually experience PTSD. CSF has received extensive attention from the psychology community, such as in the entire January, 2011 issue of the *American Psychologist* (the flagship journal of the American Psychological Association, the largest organization of psychologists), which was focused on it. It is undeniable that military service is stressful, especially for those warfighters who are required to serve repetitive tours of combat duty, and the concomitant increased risk of PTSD, as well as other psychological problems (e.g., suicides, marital dissolutions, etc.), is significant. However, we explore the many implications of CSF as a case in which the positive psychology approach to virtues is being applied on a large scale. It provides an opportunity to examine whether resiliency can be reasonably seen as a virtue unto itself as promoted by positive psychology or, alternatively, whether it should best be viewed as a virtue only if it is properly contextualized in relationship to both other traits and environmental affordances as promoted by humanistic psychology.

To begin, we offer some general critiques of CSF. One is that CSF is based only on resiliency research studies conducted with nonsoldier populations, such as middle and high school students trained in so-called resiliency skills by teachers. Novotney (2009) aptly asked, "Can a program that reduces depression and anxiety in children boost resilience among soldiers?" There has been no documented research demonstrating that CSF will achieve its goals to increase resiliency in soldiers, as there are many salient differences between young students as compared to soldiers, which is a major problem for an effort of this magnitude going forth. Another salient concern is that professional teachers provided resiliency training for students in the few studies conducted, but the trainers for CSF are selected Army sergeants who are, themselves, only receiving short-term training (i.e., in a train-the-trainer effort). This is why we referred to CSF as a *study*, not as a *training intervention*, because it aspires to use a relatively untested method in a huge project. This is quite concerning, especially given the insistence from positive psychology that humanistic psychology is unscientific, while it paradoxically promotes a study of this magnitude without adequate scientific backing. As a research study, this also creates a number of ethical concerns, such as our belief that participants in CSF should be given proper informed consent (including opportunities to withdraw and other safeguards customarily available for research participants). Soldiers are a vulnerable population with limited autonomy (e.g., similar to prisoners and others for whom research safeguards have to be more stringent than

usual), and the issue of protecting soldiers in research is even covered under the Geneva Convention. However, soldiers are being conscripted to engage in the CSF study, whose benefits are unknown and may even be deleterious. Unfortunately, there is a long history of many well-intentioned training interventions that were not well-researched before implementing and that were later found to be not only ineffectual, but harmful. For a more in-depth discussion of these general issues, see Eidelson, Pilisuk, and Soldz (2011). In addition, Leopold (2011) discussed one specifically troubling controversy related to CSF, namely that it addresses spirituality as part of resilience. This spiritual part of CSF now faces a number of legal challenges from various civil rights organizations and from individual soldiers who claim that it is unconstitutional to require soldiers to endorse a belief in a deity or higher power to be deemed spiritually fit for military service, which is part of the CSF study.

As laudatory as the goals of CSF might be overall, we think it has a number of shadow sides beyond the reservations we have thus far expressed. For example, there has been a long history of the military coopting humanistic psychology principles for purposes that some might see as incongruent with the overall goals of humanistic psychology. In regard to CSF, the gist of this program involves training soldiers to avoid making cognitive errors, such as catastrophizing traumatic events as made famous by humanistic psychologist, Ellis (1974). Similarly, the recruiting slogan employed by the US Army for many years was “Be All You Can Be” (Shyles & Hocking, 1990), taken from Maslow’s (1943) humanistic psychology declaration: “what a man *can* be, he *must* be...to become actualized in what he is potentially...to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (p. 382). The military has its own unique culture, which often is antithetical to a humanistic perspective (e.g., in asking to describe their organizational mission, warfighters commonly state things like, “our mission is to drop bombs and kill people” or “engage with and shoot the enemy”).

So, we ask, how does the US Army really interpret resiliency? The current *U.S. Army Field Manual* (2006) described various leadership attributes, including resilience defined as follows:

Resilient leaders can recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining their mission and organizational focus. Their resilience rests on will, the inner drive that compels them to keep going, even when exhausted, hungry, afraid, cold, and wet. Resilience helps leaders and their organizations to carry difficult missions to their conclusion. Your resilience and will to succeed are not sufficient to carry the day during adversity. Your competence and knowledge will guide you to pursue courses of action that lead to success and victory in battle. Your premier task is to instill resilience and a winning spirit in subordinates. That begins with tough and realistic training. Resilience is essential when accomplishing your mission. No matter what the working conditions are, a strong personal attitude helps prevail over any adverse external conditions. You will experience situations when it would seem easier to quit rather than finish the task. During those times, you need an inner source of energy to press on to mission completion. (p. 36)

Similarly, Casey (2011), a high ranking general and US Army Chief of Staff overseeing the CSF study, clearly stated that the purpose of CSF is to ensure that soldiers continue “to serve and/or to support those in combat for years to come” (p. 1), not just to deal with those needing help after combat.

One example of a similar effort is the “One Shot-One Kill” program, which has the subtitle of “a culturally sensitive program for the warrior culture” (Lunasco, Goodwin, Ozanian, & Loflin, 2010). This is described as follows:

An interactive blend of popular movie clips, animation, self-assessment, guided practice and rehearsal, and the use of analogies to world-class athletes and martial arts were tailored to the warrior culture. Symbolism and images were used throughout the seminar and items were chosen based on familiarity (e.g., vehicles, shooting weapons, fitness, etc.). Program content emphasized intangibles such as warrior ethos, core values, tradition and freedom because of their significance to the U.S. military. Program components were specifically designed to avoid suggesting weakness or absence of skills so as to not undermine the control that warriors have over their own competence. Language was an important vehicle for imbedding mental health concepts associated with strength, empowerment, and enhancement of military performance. The identification of problems was replaced with cuing warriors to strengthen preexisting skills used in theater. Participants were taught that combat skills could be easily generalized to other areas of their lives. To compliment [sic] the warrior culture’s need for emotional suppression, physiological rather than emotional mechanisms were emphasized. (p. 510)

These approaches are quite different from the salutary approach to resilience as it is being promoted from positive psychology, which is portrayed as focused on helping alleviate suffering of returning warfighters, not on making more potent warfighters. When described by the US Army Command and General Staff College (2009) Web site, however, CSF is portrayed more in the latter terms of developing an effective warfighter: “CSF enables soldiers, families, and Army civilians to have increased resilience through a holistic approach that ensures a healthy, balanced force that excels in an era of high operational tempo and persistent conflict.” So positive psychology, in tandem with the military, appears to have reduced the complexity of resiliency to a stand-alone virtue. And the resultant training of resiliency has been reduced to a simple analogy with physical exercise, as Casey described the rationale used in CSF by stating: “You can build resilience in mental fitness just like you can build resilience with pushups” (quoted in Sewell, 2011, p. 79). This emphasizes that CSF is intended for building more effective soldiers for carrying out their missions as warfighters, not necessarily for developing soldiers who can survive and perhaps even flourish despite adversity after deployment. Perhaps most indicative of this motif is a quote from Seligman, the cofounder of positive psychology and the major force behind developing CSF, in Leopold’s (2011) paper, “We’re after creating an indomitable Army.”

Consequently, Eidelson et al. (2011) asked some hard questions:

Might soldiers who have been trained to resiliently view combat as a growth opportunity be more likely to ignore or under-estimate real dangers, thereby placing themselves, their comrades, or civilians at heightened risk of harm? Similarly, by increasing perseverance in the face of adversity, might the CSF training lead soldiers to engage in actions that may later cause regret (e.g., the shooting of civilians at a roadblock in an ambiguous situation), thereby increasing the potential for PTSD or other post-combat psychological difficulties? Or, might the resilience training lead some to overcome, for the time, the disabling effects of traumatic episodes and thereby increase the likelihood of their redeployment to situations with further risk of serious disability?

They also described CSF as

ill-suited for encouraging and supporting the deep questioning and open exploration of existential issues that often arise for soldiers facing extreme circumstances. By all indications, the program's positive psychology orientation also fails to scrutinize those very institutions that subject recruits to potential trauma in order to create people sufficiently hardy to engage in death-defying [sic] and death-inflicting experiences. (Eidelson et al., 2011)

And they aptly point out that “among the most traumatic psychological scars that soldiers sustain are those resulting from what they have done to others” (Eidelson et al., 2011). We also ask, what are the overall ethical implications of CSF? And our answer is that basic principles from humanistic psychology appear to have been once more co-opted, this time under the guise of positive psychology, and are in danger of being used for possibly unethical ends, which could transform resiliency in this case from being a virtue into becoming a vice.

This type of subversion of social movements is quite common, such as the increasing trend of so-called *greenwashing* environmental organizations by corporate and other environmentally unfriendly interests to achieve purposes antithetical to the original missions of the environmental organizations (e.g., Potok, 2011), and coopting also occurs within many other kinds of institutions and movements, including unfortunately in psychology. This glaring example of the coopting of humanistic psychology from positive psychology illustrates the need for a more critical approach that looks holistically at the world in a more nuanced and complex way, as the CSF study for training in resiliency may not be toward a virtuous end. In fact, CSF has the potential to create desensitized warfighters who are immune to appropriately catastrophizing the horrors of war, which are truly catastrophic, and trained instead to compartmentalize their emotions to obediently perform the bidding of extant power structures. We find this vision of resiliency to be reminiscent of the mythical good Nazi concentration camp guards, who by day shoved people into gas chambers, but at night returned home to be devoted to their families.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that resiliency is, indeed, a potential virtue, but to be realized fully as a virtue, it must be seen as a superordinate virtue among a network of related virtues and environmental affordances that protect an individual from adversity and encourage growth in the face of suffering. Practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, can be said to operate as the master virtue, guiding people in their everyday life as they engage in their daily practices, enabling resiliency and the other potential virtues to be appropriately lived out as actual virtues, rather than character strengths that merely actualize vices (and produce maladaptive and even unethical consequences). The conclusion we draw is that resiliency and similar constructs can never simply be considered as stand-alone virtues. Unless they actually are intended toward benevolent, rather than malevolent, ends, and are harmonized with other potential virtues and contexts, they cannot be virtues. The nature of these ends and, more puzzlingly, how to decide their relative benevolence and malevolence, requires the analytic tools of fields outside of science, as there are no available scientific methods to even remotely evaluate these objectively. This understanding is sorely needed to allow researchers and consumers of research to reflect radically on the ethical grounds of any science purportedly related to achieving the good. Positive psychology has offered much

of value in exploring the construct of resiliency, but its narrower focus on only quantitative empirical research from a presumed value-neutral stance belies the much more complex and holistic exploration needed, which humanistic psychology provides. Its assumption that resilience is a virtue across all contexts leads well-intentioned theory, research, and praxis astray. This appears particularly germane in the potential for resilience to become a vice instead of a virtue, as illustrated by Hitler's resiliency and the concerns we have about CSF training in resilience possibly having unanticipated negative consequences. We suggest that an exclusive focus on the positive, without a holistic sensitivity to the complementary negative, aspects of the human condition will always be problematic. In this sense, by its ignoring the shadow side of the human condition, positive psychology has in essence become the shadow of humanistic psychology.

After the initial enthusiasm for positive psychology (and its consequent incredible success in marketing itself as exemplified by programs like CSF), new understandings are emerging that suggest that this narrow coopting of humanistic psychology might be time limited, like most fads. For example, rather than seeing the experience of happiness as always overall positive, it is now being shown that this is more complex (e.g., Gruber, Mauss, & Tamir, in press). Likewise, other constructs that seem on the surface to be overwhelmingly positive may actually have significant shadow sides, requiring more nuanced approaches, such as offered by humanistic psychology. The well-quoted nostrum, *the road to hell is paved with good intentions*, perhaps illustrates well how overemphasis on the positive, which on the surface looks only positive, may result in an inevitable yet unintentional backlash toward the negative. In contrast, we advocate that a balanced approach, exploring the holistic intermixture of positive and negative such as proffered by humanistic psychology, offers a better wager for both scientific advancement and human betterment.

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